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H – 3790

International Court of Justice

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RECORD OF AN INTERVIEW WITH HERR HESS ON MAY 14th

We started by asking Herr Hess how he was. He replied that he was feeling better. A number of complaints which he had had to make about his treatment had been remedied. In particular he had objected to being under the constant supervision of a private soldier. He also had a number of small requests to make, namely, the loan of certain books including "Three Men in a Boat", the return of his drugs, the return of his camera and a piece of his aeroplane as a souvenir. The Duke of Hamilton said that he would make enquiries as to the possibility of giving him satisfaction on these points.

Herr Hess then passed to an account of his flight. He said he had left Augsberg at 5.45 p.m. and on arrival off the coast of Scotland had found it too light to fly inland. He had then circled for an hour and a half over the North Sea, until he judged that it had become dark enough to cross the coast. He described at length the difficulty he had had in leaving his machine. On two occasions he became unconscious, the second time being after pulling the ripcord of his parachute. He was still unconscious when he reached the ground. He had been very well treated by the farmer on whose land he had come down, but he had been painfully surprised to be lodged in a common cell at Glasgow.

He then passed to political questions. He said that, on reflection, he had omitted to explain that there were two further conditions attached to his peace proposals. First, Germany could not leave Iraq in the lurch. The Iraqis had fought for Germany and Germany would, therefore, have to require us to evacuate Iraq. I observed that this was going considerably beyond the original proposal that German interests should be confined to Europe, but he retorted that, taken as a whole, his proposals were more than fair. The second condition was that the peace agreement should contain a provision for the reciprocal indemnification of British and German nationals whose property had been expropriated as the result of war.

Herr Hess concluded by saying that he wished to impress on us that Germany must win the war by blockade. We had no conception of the number of submarines now building in Germany. Hitler always did things on a grand scale and devastating submarine war, supported by new types of aircraft, would very shortly succeed in establishing a completely effective blockade of England It was fruitless for anyone here to imagine that England could capitulate and that the war could be waged from the Empire. It was Hitler's intention, in such an eventuality, to continue the blockade of England, even though the island had capitulated, so that we would have to face the deliberate starvation of the population of these islands. I observed that so far as the actual maintenance of life was concerned, we should probably not require very much shipping, but Herr Hess replied that the German blockade would be so effective that it would not be possible for us to run the blockade even with one or two ships a day.

As we were leaving, he said that if conversations were initiated, as he hoped, he trusted that a qualified interpreter would be provided and that the conversations would not be attended by a large number of persons. As a Reich Minister he could not place himself in the position of being a lone individual subjected to a cross fire of comment and questions from a large number of persons.

15th May, 1941.

22nd January 1946

4087) Certified that the text set out above and entitled "Record of an Interview with Herr Hess on May 14th" is a true copy of a document held in the files of H.M.Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London.

David Maxwell Fyfe

Deputy Chief Prosecutor for the United Kingdom

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